

**DULUTH AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Tuesday, February 20, 2007 - 5:00 p.m.**  
**Room 402 - Fourth Floor, City Hall**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Robert Powless, Michele Gordon, Donna Ennis, Warner Wirta, Tony LaDeaux, John Day, Joy Dorscher, Brian Wilson, Ricky DeFoe, Beatrice Kitto

**EXCUSED ABSENT:** Mike Sayers

**ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** John Judd

**OTHERS PRESENT:** See sign-in sheet

**CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS WELCOME**

New Members: Beatrice Kitto, Ricky DeFoe, Brian Wilson,

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 20, 2006 MEETING:**

**Motion by Warner Wirta, seconded by Brian Wilson, to approve the November 20, 2006 minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 16, 2007 MEETING:**

**Motion by Warner Wirta, seconded by Brian Wilson, to approve the January 16, 2007 minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.**

County Commissioner Steve O'Neil presented a plan that is on our agenda at a later meeting regarding housing. He will send a two-page summary report on this matter to John Judd, who will forward it to the Commissioners for consideration at the next meeting.

**COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM / OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

Dr. Powless welcomed Police Chief Gordon Ramsay to the meeting. Chief Ramsay shared that he is trying to recruit more Native Americans to the Police Force. There are currently ten recruits. None are Native American, but one is a Latino person. Ramsay also shared a goal to strengthen working relations with the Native community. He recognizes that Native Americans are the largest population of color in this area. He has been talking with Karen Diver, new Fond du Lac Chairman, about these issues, as well as to teachers in the area. He wants to do a better job of cultural awareness with Duluth's new recruits and a better awareness of cultural issues with his officers.

Computers can now be used to look at complaints about officers, so Chief Ramsay can see much more quickly what is happening with each officer.

Questions from the Commissioners and audience followed. Dr. Powless asked whether violent crime and drug related crimes are getting worse in Duluth. Ramsay said drug crimes are up; violent crimes are not being counted accurately with the computer system now in place. A rash of street robberies occurred last summer and Meth and crack are on the rise, and they go hand in hand with the type of crime we are facing.

Warner Wirta asked: Is there better data collection and sharing of information between reservations and the City? Ramsay said not as much as he would like. Karen Diver and Chief Ramsay are discussing this. Wirta agrees that there should be a lot more of this.

Brian Wilson: What type of cultural awareness education is being given to the officers? Ramsay said it is currently one run by the People's Institute North. All officers have gone through this, but he would like more specific training regarding Native Americans. He has heard the Community Relations out of Chicago has done a good job with this.

Ricky Defoe: Asked about the ten new hires and why there are no Native Americans being recruited and whether there are candidates at Fond du Lac College, for example, who would qualify. Ramsay agreed, but said Civil Service exams were not passed by people of color in the past, although they were good candidates. The Civil Service exams can be a problem, and Ramsay like to do away with them and use other methods, and he hopes to start that this Spring.

Joy Dorscher: Are American Indians sitting for the test? Ramsay said no American Indians are sitting for the test and only one Latino person took the test this last time. Dorscher: Have you looked at why Native Americans don't want to work for the City of Duluth. Ramsay is looking into this in consultation with Scott Lyons of the Fond du Lac College.

Beatrice Kitto: Do you go to the high schools and talk to the kids about recruitment? Ramsay said they do and mini police scenarios are one way to work with kids to interest them. If any youth are interested, have them contact Ramsay about "riding alongs" etc.

Tony LaDeaux said both his boys are interested in pursuing officer training eventually.

Wirta: Has any contact been attempted with the Reservation Business Committees (RCBs) to see if there is any interest in recruiting officer candidates? Any type of correspondence? Ramsay: None other than Fond du Lac but that's a great idea.

Dorscher: Police Explorer's Post – do you bring in Native American police officers from out of the area to talk to the kids? Ramsay: Yes and we have four Native Americans on the force right now who do some PR work on the reservation and with Native people.

Beatrice Kitto. Is the training free for a Native American Interested: Ramsay: Yes. Fond du Lac pays for this to happen. The degrees are for either two or four years. I prefer the four-year degree.

Wirta: There have been some very serious crimes committed in the Duluth area against Native Americans. What is happening to solve these crimes at this time? The feeling in the community is that it's easy to kill Indians. Ramsay said Don Smith was one of his favorite people to work with downtown. Ramsai said police pretty much whot did it, but they need someone to look deeper into this case, and also others. When our numbers are up again, Ramsay hopes to put someone on these cases.

From the audience: Cultural sensitivity training for officers is highly supported. A lot of reservations have closed themselves off to things, becoming more self-governing. That would be a hard door to open

A van came to our property a while ago and throws a little boy out. He goes to a fence and measures something, then throws the boy back in the van. This man is stalking me. He sits in front of the house this going on for many years now. We have given the phone number and address that is his to the Police. Ramsay asked to have an officer come and talk to him and his father about this.

Regarding the gathering of statistics, are they counting convictions or just arrests? Ramsay said they keep their own and also look at all assaults statistics. They follow up the best they can on calls that come in. If police can't verify it, it goes in as pending. Questions are sent back to the officer for clarity.

Is any incentive for Native Americans to join the force? Is there a program in place like the Bureau of Indian Affairs that offer an incentive for Indian people to come here to work on this force? Ramsay said they need to appeal to some from out of the area possibly. Cultural sensitivity is a great idea, and needs to continue to happen.

The Indian Commission has opened a lot of doors with the City of Duluth. It would be good to invite officers from the reservations to come and talk here to the Commission. This would be a good place to connect the police and the reservation officers. This Indian Commission represents our power and a place for people to come to talk and be heard. Invite Tribal Council members at times to come here.

Is there a City liaison person connected to race issues? Yes, the Human Rights Commission – staffed by Meg Bye. Donna Ennis: Mike Sayers is the Red Lake liaison officer for that band.

Ennis asked Chief Ramsay's opinion of the Citizens Review Board. Ramsay said he supports looking into this. He thinks there is a need and it would build trust. The issue comes down to how much power the board would have. He wants to see what the options are and look at this.

John Day: Recommended a subcommittee meet with Chief Ramsay regarding the Citizens Review Board. LaDeaux said there is a lot coming up very fast, however, and he and Defoe met with Karen Diver and the Fond du Lac Business Committee, and were met positively by her and the board regarding this matter. LaDeaux shares there are models of the Review Boards that do work and we have to look at these closely. Internal and external; subpoena versus non-subpoena, all are critical issues regarding this matter. Chief Ramsay said he realizes trust is an important issue that needs to be built right now.

Wirta brought up his Veteran Administration work in St. Cloud on what they did with a Citizens Review Board there.

#### **REPORT FROM THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE AND ELECTION OF COMMISSION OFFICERS FOR 2007:**

Dr. Powless reminded the Commissioners that he decided a year ago that 2006 would be his last year as Chairperson. John Day and Donna Ennis presented the final vote: 3 votes for Dr. Joy Dorscher as Co-Chair; 2 votes for Michele Gordon; 1 vote for Dr. Powless. Secretary – 1 vote for Donna Ennis

**Motion by John Day, seconded by Tony LaDeaux, electing Joy Dorscher and Michele Gordon as Co-Chairs and Donna Ennis as secretary. The motion was unanimously approved.**

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

##### **Report on the Indian Center/Housing Project – Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts**

A purchase agreement will be in place within the next month or two. Dr. Powless knows of an individual who will match a \$50,000 donation if someone is willing to donate. Fond du Lac is willing to provide some financial support. Discussion and questions from community members regarding the housing project.

##### **Report on Toxic Barrels in Lake Superior – GREG PRICE**

Price would like a letter from the Commission to go to Congress of American Indians requesting an investigation of the dumping of toxic barrels in Lake Superior waters. The commission asked Price to draft a letter and bring it to the next Commission meeting for signature by Commissioners. The Commission will then consider copying it to other organizations with an interest in this matter.

##### **Vote on funding the work of Eileen Luna-Firebaugh, regarding the establishment of Independent Citizens Review Board.**

**Motion by Wirta, seconded by Dr. Powless, to provide not less than \$500 and not more than \$1,000 of DAIC money to Ms. Eileen Luna-Firebaugh for a two-day program regarding civilian review of Police operations and Police / American Indian relations.**

**NEW BUSINESS:****Discussion of 2007 Commission Work Plan and Calendar -**

A revised Commission Work Plan was submitted. It will be reviewed for approval at the next DAIC meeting.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:**

Dr. Powless – a cultural diversity room to be established in every school is being recommended to the Johnson Control Study of IDS 709.

Wilson – happy to be part of the Commission.

Defoe – this is an exciting time in Indian country.

Kitto – Indian people are far behind in justice and equality.

LaDeaux – March 19<sup>th</sup> is an exciting day for Native people.

Wirta – he sees many positive changes in Indian communities

Day – Welcomes the new members.

Ennis – Announced two exciting workshops. Additional information will be sent to the DAIC

Gordon - welcoming new members and Honoring Dr. Powless for he past work as the Commission Chair

Dorscher – Also honoring Dr. Powless and announcing a Health promotion. Project.

**NEXT MEETING/DATE/LOCATION:**

March 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. Room 402 City Hall

**ADJOURNMENT: 8:20 PM**